REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This paper is in response to the Office Action dated December 14, 2006. Claims 1–16 are pending. Claims 1–6, 9, 10, and 13–16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. 5,048,278 (Jones et al.). Claims 11 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being upatentable over Jones et al. in view of U.S. 4,853,867 (Collins et al.). In addition, Claim 10 was objected to based on an informality. Claims 7 and 8 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Claim Objections

The Office Action objected to Claim 10 based on an informality. Claim 10 has been amended herein to correct the informalities noted by the Office Action.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Office Action rejected independent Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Jones et al.

The claimed invention discloses a cutting head for a brush cutter, edge trimmer or similar device that has a passageway **112** for a cutting string **300** and a movable locking element **400** suitable for locking the string **300** in the passageway. See Figs. 4 and 9. A disc-shaped part **110** is provided to contribute to the implementation of the cutting head and can include a set of bevels **111, 111', 111''**. See page 6, lines 20–30. In particular, page 7 lines 1–6 and Figures 4 and 9 of the specification disclose that the two bevels **111** and **111''** "extend in a rectilinear and adjacent manner the one to the other to delimit a first zone **112** of cutting string strand passageway, this passageway opening onto the outside at a first opening **113** and a second opening **115**, for the outlet of a strand of a cutting string." Thus the passageway **112** for the cutting string **300** is rectilinear and offset from a central axis of the head, as seen in Fig. 9.

Jones et al. discloses an apparatus for holding a plurality of flexible cutting filaments for cutting grass. The cutting blade **R** includes "a number of U-shaped passageways **12** disposed in

the disk **8**," as shown in Figure 3. In particular, each passageway **12** includes leg portions **16** and **17**, each extending radially outward from the centrally-located hub **2**. The leg portions **16** and **17** are joined together at a base portion **18** disposed adjacent the hub **2**, "thereby forming a U shape." See Jones et al., col. 3, lines 4–15. Thus, Jones et al. does not disclose a passageway that is rectilinear and offset from a central axis of the head.

To clarify the claims in light of this distinction, Claim 1 has been amended herein to include that "the passageway is rectilinear and offset from a central axis of the head," as described in the specification.

The claimed invention also discloses a locking element such as a shoe **400** placed in a housing. The shoe **400** can have a first face possessing a plurality of teeth **404** extending transversely to the axis **A** of the string passageway **112** and intended to bite into the cutting string **300** engaged in the passageway **112**, as well as an opposite face **402** extending at an oblique angle relative to the first face and intended to rest against the rear face of the housing. See page 13, lines 19–33 and page 14, lines 1–3. A cutting strand of string **300** may be engaged in its passageway **112** from its outlet opening **115** in the direction of the arrow F' and may push back the shoe **400** against the (moderate) force of a pressure spring **500**, as shown in Fig. 9. The shoe may thus rise by sliding against the rear face **116** of its housing by the amount necessary to let the strand of string pass. See page 14, lines 13–24. As a pulling force is exerted on the strand of string in the direction opposite the arrow F', such as when the device is working due to friction and impacts against plants, the sliding shoe **400**, "which acts as a one-way lock," exerts a retention force on the strand of string **300** through its teeth. Page 14, lines 29–33 and page 15, lines 1–8.

In contrast, Jones et al. discloses a structure **34** for locking a cutting filament **10** within the passageway, shown in Figs. 2, 5, and 6. The structure **34** includes parallel, spaced apart wall portions **36** and **38** and a transverse wall portion **40** that form a lock channel **42** "in which a central portion of the cutting filament **10** is wedged." Jones et al. does not disclose a sliding or movable locking element. Rather, it is the portion of cutting filament **10** that is "wedged into the locking channels **42**" in Jones et al.

Claim 1 of the present invention has been amended to clarify that the one-way locking element is a movable locking element. Furthermore, Claims 2–10 and 12–15 have also been amended to be consistent with independent Claim 1.

CONCLUSION

In view of the remarks and amendments presented above, it is respectfully submitted that Claim 1 and all the claims depending therefrom (*i.e.*, Claims 2–16) are in condition for allowance. It is respectfully requested that a Notice of Allowance be issued in due course. The Examiner is requested to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney to resolve any remaining issues in order to expedite examination of the present application.

The patentability of the independent claims has been argued as set forth above and thus Applicants will not take this opportunity to argue the merits of the rejection with regard to the dependent claims. However, Applicants do not concede that the dependent claims are not independently patentable and reserve the right to argue the patentability of the dependent claims at a later date if necessary.

It is not believed that extensions of time or fees for net addition of claims are required, beyond those that may otherwise be provided for in documents accompanying this paper. However, in the event that additional extensions of time are necessary to allow consideration of this paper, such extensions are hereby petitioned under 37 CFR § 1.136(a), and any fee required therefore (including fees for net addition of claims) is hereby authorized to be charged to Deposit Account No. 16-0605.

Respectfully submitted,

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